

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1-14. (Canceled)

15. (Currently Amended) A process for preparing a pearl based on expanded polymer and having a continuous skin, comprising the following successive steps:

a) extruding an expandable composition comprising a thermoplastic polymer and an expanding agent, in molten state, to effect expansion thereof, and

b) cooling using a liquid and chopping the expanded material thus obtained.

16. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a gas that can disperse or dissolve in the polymer melt.

17. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a pore-forming agent.

18. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a volatile compound that can dissolve in the polymer melt.

19. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expanding agent comprises a chemical compound that can react chemically with the polymer by heating, to generate a gas.

20. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the polymer comprises a polyamide.

21. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises a nucleating agent and/or a surfactant and/or a plasticizer.

22. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the expandable composition comprises reinforcing fillers.

23. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the cooling during step b) is performed using a liquid.

24. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a diameter of less than or equal to 10 mm.

25. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 15, wherein the pearl obtained has a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.8 g/cm^3 .

26. (Previously Presented) A pearl comprising an expanded polyamide or polyester having a continuous skin.

27. (Previously Presented) The pearl as defined by Claim 26, having a diameter of less than or equal to 10 mm.

28. (Previously Presented) The pearl as defined by Claim 27, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.8 g/cm^3 .

29. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 22, said reinforcing fillers comprise glass fibers, matting agents, pigments, dyes, heat or light stabilizers, bioactive agents, anti-soiling agents and/or anti-static agents.

30. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 23, said liquid comprising water.

31. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 24, said diameter being less than or equal to 5 mm.

32. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.5 g/cm^3 .

33. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 25, said mass per unit volume being less than or equal to 0.3 g/cm^3 .

34. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 27, having a diameter of less than or equal to 5 mm.

35. (Previously Presented) The process as defined by Claim 28, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.5 g/cm^3 .

36. (Previously Presented) The pearl as defined by Claim 28, having a mass per unit volume of less than or equal to 0.3 g/cm^3 .

37. (Previously Presented) The pearl product of the process as defined by Claim 15.